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ANARCHISM & RACISM

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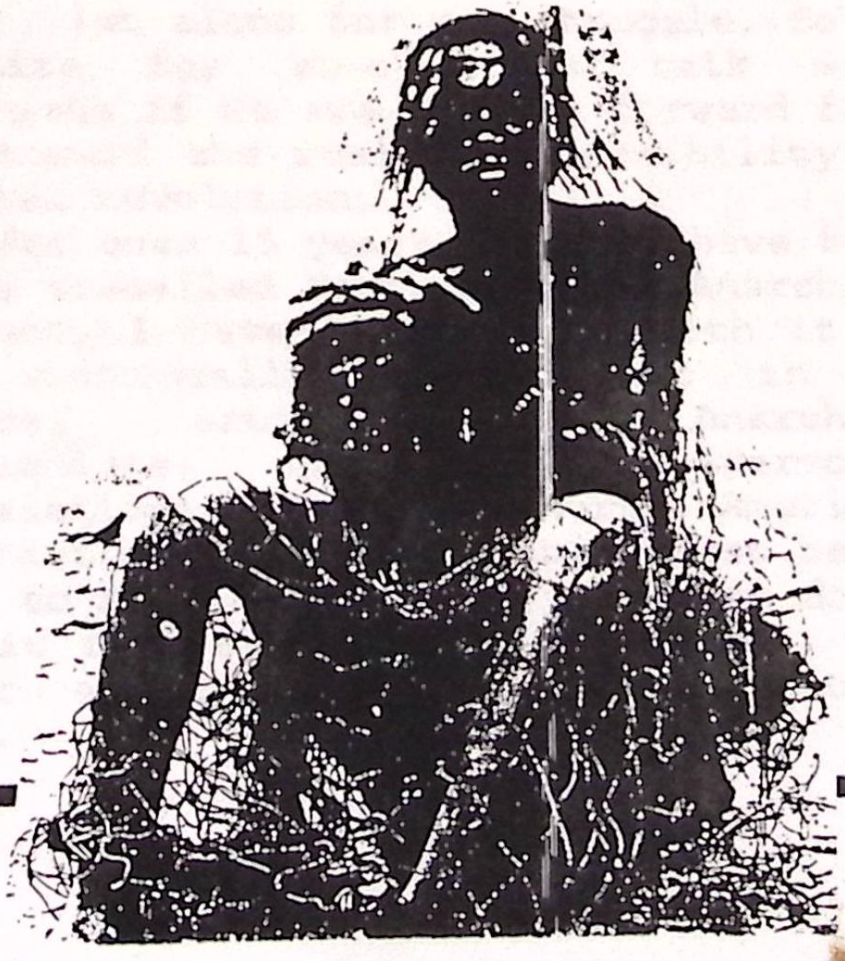

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Editorial:

Anarchism and Racism

This is the first issue of the **Journal of Anarchy and the Black Revolution**, and although I do not think it will be the last, I do not know what form and shape it will take from here on out. This is very much dependent on the nature of the anti-authoritarian Black struggle which is developing and fermenting in our communities. We do not know precisely what our relationship with the North American Anarchist movement will be. One of fraternal relations, hostility, or wary support.

Clearly, a movement which is all White, middle-class, self-absorbed, and naive about our struggle is not one we can unite with. In addition, it is a movement which can do very little for itself, let alone for our struggle. So it is time for some frank talk with Anarchists if we are to move forward from here toward the realistic possibility of a social revolution.

For over 15 years, since I have been in the so-called North American Anarchist movement, I have been at war with it. I have continually pointed out in my letters, articles in Anarchist publications, speeches, and personal conversations that the North American Anarchist scene is not what it must be if it is to be taken seriously. I even doubt that it is a social movement at all, but rather a White youth counter-cultural scene.

I am not the first one to have recognized this. Many other Black and non-white Anarchists I have spoken to like Juliana in Minneapolis, Greg in Seattle, Barbara in New York, Ojore in New Jersey, Shawn in Massachusetts, and others have recognized this. Also many black radical and community activists who might be interested in Anarchism are turned off by an all-White middle class scene. Who can blame them? The Anarchist movement has some of the worst politics on the question of class and race in this society, and do not even **pretend** to be concerned with the plight of the super-oppressed Black masses. Whenever I have attempted to call for reforms within the Anarchist movement itself, such as racial and cultural diversity, recruiting more Blacks and 3rd world peoples into the movement, building an anti-racist movement of a new type to challenge the white identity as well as the oppression of non-White peoples, I have been resisted at every turn by Anarchist purists" and White radicals within the scene. I fought with the **IWW**, Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation and other United States Anarchist groups in the 1970's, when I first came into the Anarchist scene. I most recently went through such a struggle with a group called Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, which has its headquarters in New York.(see the article in this issue for clarification). So it is not just a matter of this being a new issue, this has gone on for years!

Anarchist Purism and White Supremacy

The question then arises: are the Anarchists consciously building a white movement, for what I call "white rights" issues that only the radical chic middle class are interested in? This is the case even when many of them live in cities which are majority-Black population centers, such as Detroit, Oakland, Atlanta, Philadelphia and others. They live in the Anarchist ghetto and look at the Black community which surrounds them with suspicion and muted hostility. Can this type of movement work toward a social revolution when by the end of the decade it is predicted that half of this nation will be non-white peoples? I don't think so!

Even the Republican party recognizes that it cannot raise any hell or hope to build a capitalist governing coalition without the participation of non-white peoples, so what the hell is wrong with these Anarchists?

Anarchist purism is a form of ideological conformity, a method of keeping Anarchist ideals "pure" and to prevent any new movements from arising which violate cardinal principles of traditional European Anarchist thought and practice. this also works to ensure that only white people will define, and will continue to dominate Anarchist theory, and that only white people will make up the ranks of the movement in the main. Movements which arise in the Black or Hispanic communities, which are influenced by revolutionary nationalism

and the anti-authoritarian core of Anarchism would be denounced as "not being truly Anarchist", and thus denied support. I have seen this done historically to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960's, Martin sostre (and myself) in the 1970's. MOVE in the 1980's, and to this very day. Without fail, this is a way of keeping the movement "right" [and white]. But it also keeps it in an ideological straitjacket which separates it from the social events outside the white radical community, which is where the real world is; so it helps of marginalize Anarchist when one demands conformity to the catechism that Bakunin or Kropotkin wrote over 100 years ago. How is this any different from the Marxists?

There is also the question of elitism and racism from those Anarchists like the Love and Rage group who feel that they can think and speak for Black revolutionaries and the communities they are from. These people are from privileged households, have left home to play the big bad revolutionary and fake being poor. The truth is a pair of combat boots, rip jeans, and a dirty T-shirt does not make one a poor person or an expert on American racial politics. This is nothing but missionary work to these people. They may have changed attitudes; they are arrogant, doctrinaire, and condescending to the max.They feel that they have **the answer**, and that everyone, especially Blacks, should follow them to the promised land. Only they are qualified to speak on questions of race and class. They know everything!

White radicals like this really irk me. This is why only an arrogant, self-centered movement will surface with this kind of prevailing social ethic at the core of the group. But there is another kind of white radical within the Anarchist movement which needs to be taken to task and this is the type that claims not to know any difference between the condition of Black and White workers, and argues that we "are all in the same boat". This type pretends not to see any racial oppression in U.S. society hardly at all, and that Blacks and other non-whites do not deserve any "special treatment". This type of person is usually to be found in the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in the United States. This is in fact an old line, an economist position, which sacrifices the struggle against racism to that of class peace among the Black and white workers.We are to unite around economic issues, and avoid "contentious" and "divisive" issues of race. but as i will expose, this is in itself really a racist and escapist position, and shows one to have no moral backbone at all.

It is really a cop-out to try to claim that the "working class" is being oppressed without pointing that there is no monolithic working class in America, and never has been. There has always been a brutalized and exploited African-American working class, beginning with slavery, through both agrarian and industrial periods of the economy, down to the so-called information age. Black labor has always been subjected to racial oppression in addition to that of the struggle as workers fighting the rule of capital.

It is reductionism of the worst sort to claim there are no differences in the social position of the Black working class, no special oppression, as a group like Workers Solidarity Alliance does. In an article published in **Ideas and Action**, the **WSA** political journal, one writer stated that he saw no difference or "nothing special" as he put it between left-handed persons and the plight of African-Americans. But the most infamous issue of the publication was in a full page article in issue#13, printed in 1990, called **"White Workers and Racism"** in response to the racist murder of Yusuf Hawkins in New York.

In the most sickening fashion possible, the article tries to equate "attacks against innocent whites by minority youth".....with Hawkins' racist murder. Neil Farber (a pseudonym for an unidentified member of **WSA**) talks about "racist and demagogues on both sides", a classic white middle class cop-out. He denied that there is such a thing as white skin privilege, saying that it was just the creation of a number of Left-wing sects in the 1960's. We must assume that he was talking about the Black Panther Party or the revolutionary syndicalist League of Revolutionary Black Workers, although he tries to say he talking about white radicals.

He says that the relatively higher standard of living is due to "workers struggles", as if the white workers had "earned" their booty by fighting the boss. Not true, the white middle class standard of living is only possible because of the super-exploitation of colonial countries and enslavement,

and continued super-exploitation of African-American and other non-white workers.

This nonsense by Farber is crowned by a statement that the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement has "always" supported the struggles of oppressed workers. this is a lie, the Anarchist movement generally has never supported the Black struggle or engaged in anti-racist movements. The **WSA** is no exception. they are just now doing it.

The denial of white skin privilege is a type of **"obscurantism"** that the white Left in general, and the Anarchists, in particular, are guilty of. This obscurantism or obscuring of the truth of Black oppression has also been called the "white blind spot" by radicals like Noel Ignatiev, the longtime radical organizer and theorist on race and class issues.

But in addition to hiding behind economist issues, there is the kind of **eclectic escapism** within North American Anarchism which pretends that gender oppression, gay sexual oppression, class exploitation or other oppression, or some other contradiction among the white nationality is on a par with or even more important than white supremacy.

These are usually people who also subscribe to **compartmentalization**, or attempts to neatly confine the dynamics of racism to a side issue or single issue politics, as just another "ism". This is reflected in their movements almost all-white movements against "fascism" or what they call racism, usually crude **KKK/Nazi** organizing.

(see my article on vanguardism versus vanguardism). They never deal with institutional racism or the white supremacy differential in the quality of life in this country. Its' all sophomoric, idealist, and emotional, and it certainly doesn't do Blacks and other non-whites any real good. We are no safer from fascism because of these white radical do-gooders. They are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Who knows if it will be possible for the U.S. anarchist scene to coexist with, let alone work with a newly emerging Black anti-authoritarian movement? One thing that White Anarchists must understand it that is not merely a question of getting Blacks and other non-whites to join **Anarchist** associations, just to say they have a **Black face**; we must work to build a non-racist society and we must have **principled unity.**

Well, I have raged long enough, now to get this premiere issue. I hope you will enjoy it.